

## **Determining Accessibility in Your AmeriCorps Programs and Facilities**

Accessibility means easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in and/or use safely and with dignity by every individual. There are two levels of accessibility: programmatic and environmental. Programmatic accessibility refers to personnel issues such as essential service functions, reasonable accommodations, interviewing, and development of a disability management plan. Environmental accessibility refers to the architectural barriers that exist in our buildings, parks, and facilities.

AmeriCorps program directors should evaluate what has been done to make programs and existing facilities accessible and useable by individuals with disabilities. The purpose of this evaluation is twofold. First, it allows the gathering of information about an AmeriCorps program's level of accessibility. A good self-evaluation will capture both strengths and weaknesses. This information leads to the development of a concrete plan based on real data which in turn will increase the level of accessibility of programs. Second, it helps in the development of an internal action plan. A good internal action plan prioritizes the existing communication and architectural barriers and places a time line on their removal. The following resources, which address the requirements of the National and Community Service Trust Act regarding individuals with disabilities and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, have been provided to help determine accessibility:

- Access AmeriCorps Checklist,  
Revised Section I, Recruitment/Accommodation  
Practices

## Section II, General Non-Discriminatory Obligations

## Section III, Communication Accessibility

- The Americans with Disabilities Act--Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal

### **Section I: Recruitment/Accommodation Practices**

The following portion of the checklist reviews recommended recruitment and accommodation practices for AmeriCorps programs. The requirements as legislated by the disability laws are included here along with suggestions as to how to evaluate your efforts to date.

1. Has the program affirmatively sought to recruit applicants and retain qualified members with disabilities?

Yes            No

2. Do recruitment materials, including photos and ad copy, contain positive images of individuals with disabilities, and do they indicate a commitment to inclusion of individuals with disabilities?

Yes            No

3. Do you have a written policy addressing discrimination on the basis of disability?

Yes            No

4. Do you regularly review your recruitment practices to be certain that you, your supervisors, or external consultants are nondiscriminatory in the treatment of applicants and members with disabilities?

Yes            No

a. Do your interview questions address an applicant's ability to perform essential position functions without specifically asking about disability?

Yes                  No

5. Are service descriptions in writing?

Yes                  No

a. Have service descriptions been analyzed to determine which functions of a member's service are 'essential' and which are 'marginal'?                  Yes                  No

6. Are supervisory staff aware of what questions can and cannot be asked in an interview?

Yes                  No

a. If yes, describe how this information was obtained. For example, did staff participate in a training session, read relevant literature, etc.?

b. Are questions asked about any of the following during the recruitment or application process?

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Health or physical condition  | Yes | No |
| 2. Physical, mental, or learning disabilities  | Yes | No |
| 3. Medical history   | Yes | No |
| 4. Previous workers' compensation claims   | Yes | No |
| 5. Prior health insurance claims   | Yes | No |
| 6. Past drug use or substance abuse  | Yes | No |
| 7. Are any of the following tests required of applicants for <i>AmeriCorps</i> positions as part of the application process? |     |    |
| a. Drug or alcohol tests   | Yes | No |
| b. HIV tests   | Yes | No |
| c. Skill or performance tests  | Yes | No |
| d. Psychological tests   | Yes | No |
| e. Intelligence tests  | Yes | No |

8. Are all members' non-medical records kept in a separate place from records that contain medical information?

Yes                  No

a. Is there a written policy regarding who has access to medical information?

Yes                      No      If yes, attach a copy of the policy.

9. Have members and applicants been informed that they are entitled to reasonable accommodations?

Yes    No

a. If yes, how have they been informed?

b. Are reasonable accommodations provided to AmeriCorps members with disabilities?                      Yes                      No

c. Has a written reasonable accommodation policy been developed?                      Yes                      No      If yes, attach a copy

d. Do supervisory staff know how to proceed if an accommodation is requested?                      Yes                      No

e. Has a specific supervisory staff member been designated to coordinate reasonable accommodations?                      Yes                      No

f. Is there a grievance procedure for denial of a reasonable accommodation request?                      Yes                      No

g. Do supervisory staff know how to secure a sign language interpreter if necessary?                      Yes                      No

h. Do supervisory staff know how to get written material:

i. transcribed into Braille                      Yes                      No

ii. printed in large print                      Yes                      No

iii. recorded on audio cassette                      Yes                      No

iv. placed on an ASCII (computer) disk?                      Yes                      No

i. Are reasonable accommodations, including sign language interpreters, written materials in alternate format, etc., provided to individuals with disabilities at off-site meetings, training, and social events?                      Yes                      No

10. As a matter of policy are interviews, member/staff meetings, and other meetings held in accessible locations?

Yes                      No

11. Are off-site member/staff trainings, holiday parties, picnics or other gatherings held in accessible locations?

Yes                      No

## Section II: General Non-Discrimination Obligations

Section I examines how well programs ensure that discrimination does not occur against applicants and members with disabilities. However, requirements for AmeriCorps programs include not only applicants and members with disabilities but the general public as well. AmeriCorps programs must provide equal opportunity to the individuals with disabilities that they serve. For example, an AmeriCorps program would be prohibited from excluding a qualified child with a disability from an after-school literacy program on the basis of the child's disability.

The following checklist will assist in determining compliance with these standards.

1. Have program members received disability awareness training?

Yes                  No

a. Describe the training (length, topic, frequency) and whom it was presented by.

2. Are there any circumstances when an individual with a disability would be prohibited from receiving services from an *AmeriCorps* program?

Yes                  No

a. If yes, please describe the circumstances.

3. Are there any circumstances when an individual with a disability would receive a lesser or different benefit from a person without a disability?

Yes                  No

a. If yes, please describe.

b. If yes, is there a way to equalize the benefit?

4. Are participants/members of the public with disabilities ever charged an extra fee for program modifications, effective communications, or structural modification costs?

Yes                  No

5. Are supervisory staff made aware of how to make reasonable modification to policies, practices, and procedures when necessary so that persons with disabilities can receive services and/or benefit from the program?

Yes            No

6. Have program members received any training or instruction as to what circumstances may necessitate modifications or accommodations?

Yes            No

a. If yes, please describe.

b. Has that training been effective? Please describe.

7. Are there instances when members of the public with disabilities are provided services in a separate or segregated setting?

Yes            No

a. If yes, please describe these instances.

8. Has your program notified outside contractors of services of their obligation to comply with your level of responsibility under the ADA for accessibility and accommodation?

Yes            No

a. Have outside contractors been required to make assurances to that effect?

Yes            No    If yes, please attach a copy of the contractual assurances.

### Section III: Communications Accessibility Checklist

Communication access refers to the way information is received and transmitted. Title III of the ADA requires the provision of auxiliary communication aids and services. These are devices that can accommodate a person with a communication disability, such as a hearing impairment, a visual impairment, or a speech/language problem. Auxiliary aids and services include qualified sign language interpreters and communication devices for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; qualified readers, taped texts, Braille or other devices for people with visual impairments; adaptive equipment or similar services and activities for people with other communication disabilities. Programs need to be evaluated in terms of access to communication. Services must be provided to people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate.

**Note:** This requirement does not prohibit the establishment of separate projects for people with disabilities, e.g. an AIDS program as long as people with AIDS are not prohibited from participating in regular programs.

1. Can information that is communicated visually (brochures, enrollment forms, handbooks, videotapes, flip charts, slides, posters, printed directional signs, and so forth) be provided in an alternate format, if requested?

Yes              No

2. Can information that is communicated verbally be provided in an alternate format, if requested?

Yes              No

3. Does the program inform participants/members of the public with disabilities that auxiliary aids and services are provided upon request?

Yes              No

a. If yes, attach an example.

4. Is there a procedure for deciding which auxiliary aids and services to provide?

Yes            No

- a. Does the procedure provide for consideration of an individual's preferred communication aid?      Yes            No
- b. Does the procedure include a mechanism for determining if the communication aid that is provided is equally as effective as the communication aid that was requested?      Yes            No

5. Can an individual with a hearing or speech impairment access a TTY/TDD phone system at your program site?

Yes            No

Title II/Section 504 requires that every effort be made to meet an individual's preferred method of auxiliary aids and services. If the preferred method cannot be provided you must ensure that the selected method is effective. A TTY/TDD (text telephone) is a device that allows individuals with hearing or speech impairments to communicate over the telephone. TTY's (Teletypewriter Phone System) and TDD's (Telecommunication Device for Deaf Persons) are different names for the same things. The abbreviation "TTY" is preferred by most users of these devices. AZRS (Arizona Relay Service) is a service that allows communication between TTY devices and telephones (voice). If you do not have access to a TTY you can call AZRS and they will transmit the message for you. This is a free service which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To access AZRS dial "711" or call 1-800-347-1695 (TTY) or 1-866-259-1768 (Voice)

- a. If so, have members been trained to use a TTY?      Yes      No
- b. Is there a mechanism for re-training?                      Yes      No
- c. If your program does not have a telephone equipped with a TTY do members know how to use Arizona Relay Service?                      Yes      No
- d. Are the telephone numbers for AZRS posted near your telephone?                      Yes      No

6. Is there a mechanism for ensuring that people who are deaf or hearing impaired are aware of an activated fire or smoke alarm?

Yes            No



7. Is there an established emergency evacuation procedure that addresses the needs of persons with disabilities, including the evacuation of individuals with mobility impairments?

Yes                      No

a. Have members been trained in this procedure?      Yes      No

b. Please describe the training.

8. Does your program have it's own web page?                      Yes      No

a. Is the web page accessible to individuals with disabilities?

Yes      No

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